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THE NEW LANARK HIGHLANDERS: MIGRATION, COMMUNITY, AND LANGUAGE 1785–c. 1850

BY MARGARET NICOLSON AND IAN DONNACHIE

This article discusses an example of Highland-Lowland migration in the early stages of industrialization. It addresses the origins, timing and quantity of Highland migration to New Lanark and in doing so highlights some migratory mechanisms, including temporary, step-wise, kin and chain migration. Moreover, it explores how Gaelic language and culture, together with religion, were sustained over a considerable period after this migration. In doing this, it notes how David Dale and Robert Owen adopted different attitudes to language. While lack of concrete evidence means that some of the conclusions must remain speculative, this example of interdisciplinary enquiry raises new questions about the migration of communities and their maintenance at their points of destination.

Since the 1970s, New Lanark has been the object of one of the largest heritage projects in Europe, achieving the status of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002. In recognition of New Lanark's interesting multilingual past the commemorative gates celebrating this accolade carry the UNESCO rubric in three languages — English, French and Gaelic. Highlanders made a substantial contribution to the development and history of New Lanark. People from the Highlands moved to New Lanark from the 1780s to the 1820s, presenting an example of chain migration, with information from early migrants feeding back to stimulate later moves from the same localities. But Highland migration to New Lanark hints at more than this.

Chain migration predicts that specific communities are more likely to move once a migration stream is established, and in doing this it gives a prominent role to cultural factors in explaining the movement. But culture does not end when the move is completed. As well as furnishing another example of the process of migration, the case of the Highlanders at New Lanark alerts us to the role of cultural factors in the demarcation of communities. Our example raises questions about how far a distinctive Highland community was maintained at New Lanark in the early years of the 19th century. In pursuing the issue of the maintenance of this community at New Lanark we thus take the study of migration further, reflecting Pryce's call for interdisciplinary study of migration and cultural change (Pryce 2000: 74–75). The first part of this article describes the migration from the Highlands to New Lanark and establishes the nature of the process. We then move on to issues of culture change, focusing on the role of the Gaelic language amongst the Highland community at New Lanark.

Labour and migration

For the first mill-masters, a major problem was the recruitment of labour. This was difficult enough in the towns or cities but, partly for social and cultural reasons, recruitment posed a major challenge in smaller communities and in the countryside. New Lanark, founded by David Dale in 1785, was ideally located to harness the waters of the River Clyde for cotton spinning, but finding workers to tend the machinery was another matter (McLaren 1990; Donnachie and Hewitt 1993). Rural Lowlanders were said to have been 'averse to indoor labour', because they disliked the idea of working in a factory, which resembled a workhouse and where time discipline was imposed (Donnachie and Hewitt 1993: 37). Within Lanark, local resistance by hand loom weavers and other textile workers was partly overcome by inducements of regular employment and housing in Dale's factory village. But the shortfall could only be met by recruitment from elsewhere. Dale tackled the problem by engaging hundreds of pauper children and orphans from Glasgow and Edinburgh parishes as apprentices, and by persuading large numbers of Highland migrants to settle permanently in New Lanark (McLaren 1990: 55-76).

Temporary and permanent migration from Highlands to Lowlands were both commonplace by the later 18th century (Devine 1979; Withers 1986). Withers in particular has clarified the timing, mechanics and scale of temporary migration, emphasizing the importance of seasonal work in agriculture, bleachfields and linen mills immediately

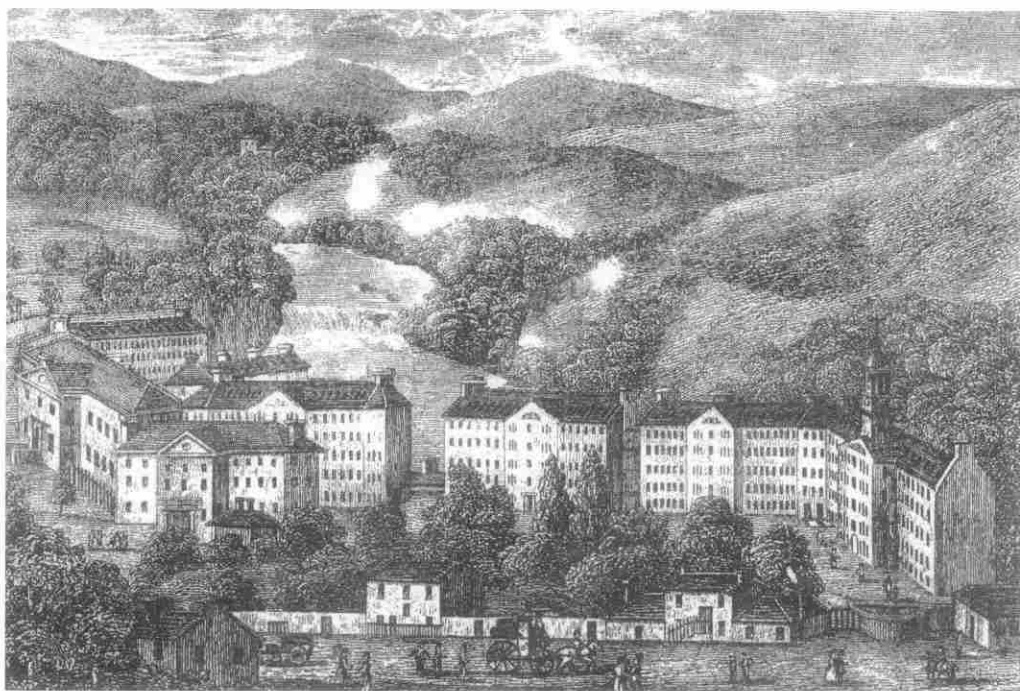


FIGURE 1 View of New Lanark, c. 1825, showing, left to right, the school, institute and mills. Source: Authors.

south of the Highland line in Angus, Perthshire and Dumbartonshire (Withers 1998: 61–83). It is also evident from the *Statistical Account* (1791–99) that Highlanders were beginning to settle permanently in such locations by the third quarter of the 18th century. Migrants from the eastern Highlands were also moving further afield into Fife and from Argyll and from the west into Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, attracted by wider opportunities in and beyond agriculture and the textile industries. By the 1780s, many Lowland towns, from Greenock (the main gateway from Argyll and the west Highlands), Paisley and Glasgow in the west, to Edinburgh, Perth and Dundee in the east, already had growing Highland communities (Withers 1986: 11).

In examining further the context of the migrations of the New Lanark Highlanders we find an interesting conjunction of circumstances. Following the establishment of the earliest cotton mills using Arkwright type machinery at Penicuik and Rothesay in the 1770s, take-off in the Scottish cotton industry occurred in the 1780s. Large spinning mills were constructed at Stanley, Deanston (both Perthshire), Ballindalloch (Stirlingshire), Catrine (Ayrshire), Blantyre and New Lanark (both Lanarkshire), with smaller plants elsewhere. These included one clutch in Galloway, at Newton Douglas, and another at Spinningdale, in east Sutherland, with which Dale was directly associated (Donnachie and Hewitt 1993: 9–15). Setting aside Spinningdale, no fewer than four of these mills, including Stanley, another Dale interest, were on or near the Highland line, and well placed to recruit Highland migrant workers.

The expansion of cotton spinning coincided with poor harvests and widespread distress in the Highlands and islands during the 1780s, and according to the *Statistical Account* these misfortunes acted as triggers for temporary, then permanent, migration. Highlanders from districts as far apart as Caithness, Sutherland, Inverness, Argyll, the Hebrides and Perthshire, and destined for factory work in Stanley and New Lanark, were said to have been victims of crop failure, increased rents and evictions. However, since the voices of the people themselves cannot be heard, and as the ministers who recorded these details were often in the pockets of the lairds (the heritors or patrons on whom their livings depended) we have to exercise caution in decoding their accounts.

The movement from the Highlands to New Lanark

While the picture is sketchy, specific details about the origins of the New Lanark Highlanders are available. The evidence suggests that the majority of people can be linked to three specific cohorts. First were those from Caithness and Sutherland; second, and probably the largest group, were those on the emigrant ship, the 'Fortune', whose abortive passage from Skye to North Carolina decanted several hundred luckless Highlanders at Greenock in 1791; and third, those from the Western Isles, specifically from the island of Barra.

By the time of the *Statistical Account* (SA) in the 1790s, temporary migration of youth seeking employment in the south was a feature in many northern parishes. Typically at Canisbay, Caithness, it was reported in 1791 that 'there are annual emigrations from the parish, both of males and females in the menial line, who leave the place of their nativity in quest of superior wages in the south of Scotland' (SA, Canisbay 1791, VIII: 156). But more permanent shifts to escape the endemic subsistence crises, and effect

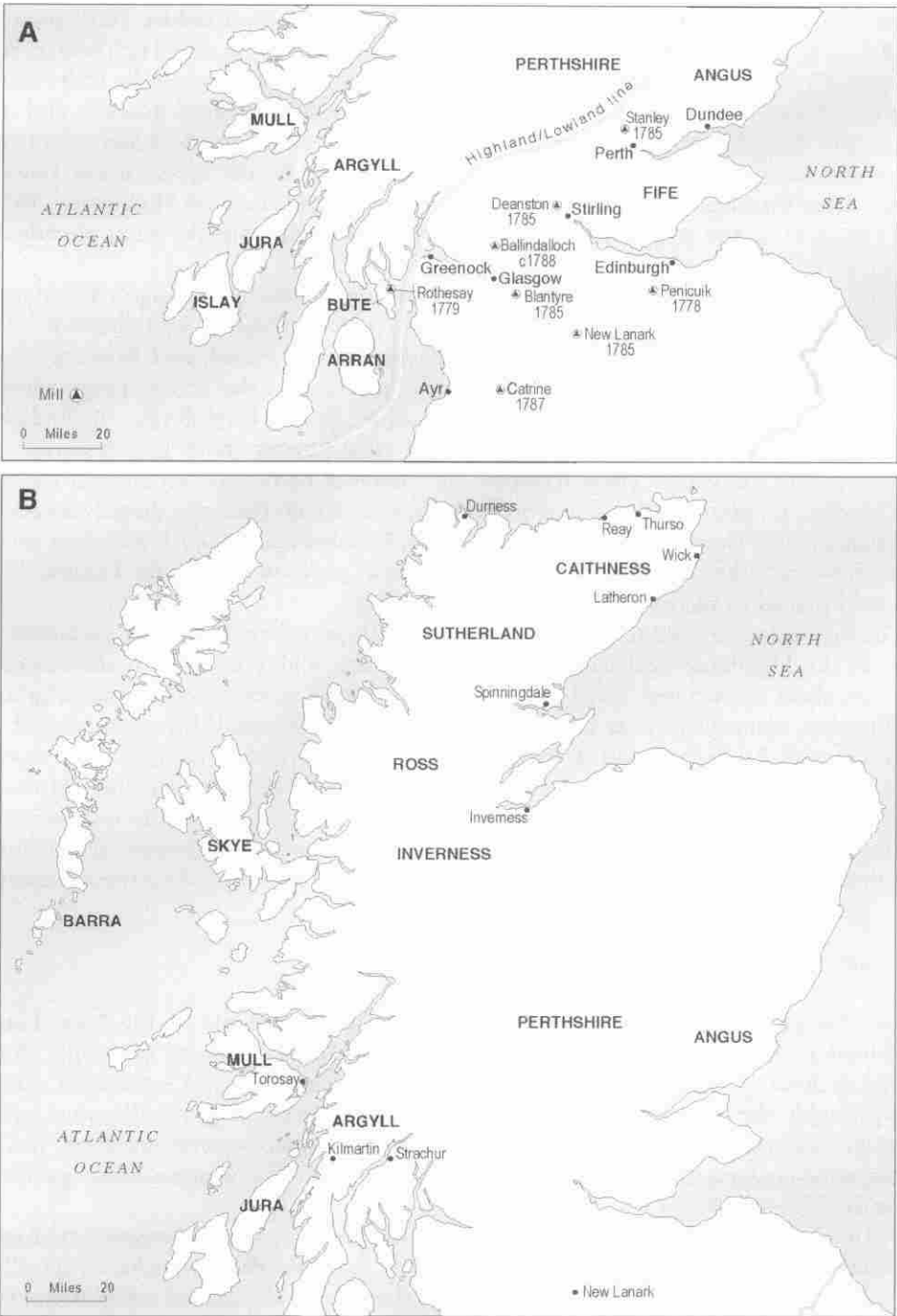


FIGURE 2 A: Location of spinning mills mentioned in the text. B: Places of origin of Highland migrants.

transition into industrial employment appear to be reflected in accounts by people from Gaelic-speaking Durness in Sutherland, 'removed, within these two or three years, to seek employment at the cotton mills' (SA, Durness 1790, III: 581-82). If movement was a response to publicity about employment opportunities generated by Dale, some may have gone to New Lanark, but the minister of Reay, Caithness, in the first specific reference, stated that 'some poor people, and one or two reduced families, went from this parish to the cotton mills in Lanark and Stanley in 1788' (SA, Reay 1792-93, VII: 574-75). These were probably the earliest Highland settlers, establishing a long-term connection with Caithness. These fresh arrivals gradually filled the new accommodation Dale had constructed by 1792 to house 200 families. One street, called Caithness Row, reflected the substantial and sustained presence of Caithness folk until the 1850s (Census of Scotland 1841 and 1851).

Shipwrecked Highlanders bound for the Carolinas were another significant component of New Lanark's early population. Sometime in the late summer or early autumn of 1791, the *Fortune*, an emigrant ship of 270 tons carrying 400 passengers, including women and children, set sail from Skye en route for the United States. Typical of the conditions which the Passenger Act 1803 had tried to remedy (which was partly designed to limit emigration), the vessel was clearly overcrowded and uncomfortable; passengers hardly had room to stretch themselves. To make matters worse, there was insufficient food and cooking utensils to prepare meals for the large number aboard and, in stormy weather, conditions rapidly deteriorated. After twelve days at sea, the ship was dismantled and put into Greenock, where many of the passengers, especially the children, died of starvation or diseases contracted on board (Royal Highland Society, Sederunt Books, III: 478-79). At that juncture, Dale, 'whose humanity [was] ever awake', evidently offered employment at the mills to 200 of the survivors, which 'the greater bulk of them accepted', being duly transported by wagons to New Lanark (SA, Lanark 1795, xv: 40; *Scots Magazine*, Letter of D. Dale, 20 Oct 1791).

The cohort from the *Fortune* clearly had a significant effect on the demographic profile of New Lanark but, apart from its origins in Skye, we have little else to go on. Emigrant vessels often called at various ports picking up passengers en route so it is possible that people from Caithness or Sutherland had boarded at Wick, Thurso or Tongue. Other passengers may have made their way to Skye prior to embarkation. For example, the sisters Flora Bell (born 1772) and Sarah McDonald (1786), from Torosay in Mull, still resident in New Lanark in 1851, could well have been passengers on the ill-fated vessel (Census of Scotland 1851).

His experience with the *Fortune* evidently spurred Dale into action on emigration. Whether for reasons of patriotism, humanity or altruism, Lowland mill masters as well as Highland landowners were becoming alarmed at the growing numbers emigrating. A letter from Dale on the subject, dated 20 October 1791, and published in the *Scots Magazine*, suggested ways of checking Highland emigration: the introduction of cotton spinning (presumably at Spinningdale); the development of a woollen industry; and encouraging migrants to seek permanent employment in Lowland towns, rather than emigrate. Dale was associated with a Society for Preventing Emigrations to Foreign Parts (also 1791) and also took direct action by advertising in newspapers and writing personally to ministers (and possibly landowners) in the Highlands, promising work for families in his cotton mills (*Glasgow Mercury* 31 Dec 1791).

One of the areas that responded to Dale's advertisements was Barra. It had been badly hit by the crises of the 1780s, which set in motion a series of migrations, including to North America. However, sometime during 1792–93 some of the inhabitants went to Glasgow, 'being invited thither by Mr David Dale, to work in his cotton manufactory'. On arrival at New Lanark it seems that Dale's terms were not quite what they expected, and some returned home. Maybe the dispute was not about wages or housing, Dale had perhaps promised to make provision for Catholic worship or Gaelic schooling and failed to deliver. Worse still, it was said, 'many of them, from a change of diet and occupation, contracted distempers of which they died'. The culture shock of factory work may have been too much for some; the Lowland diet, especially in an inland district, where fish was hard to come by, may well have been less healthy than on Barra; and possibly some fell victim to respiratory problems or malarial illnesses, still prevalent during Lowland summers. On the other hand, this may well have been a scare story spread by the minister or the laird to prevent further migration (SA, Barray 1793, XIII: 332–33).

Because of his connections through marriage with the Campbells of Jura, Dale's efforts at recruitment seem to have been particularly successful in Argyll, where the parish of Strachur and Stralachan was said to have been drained of men migrating to take work in cotton spinning mills. It is impossible to tell if these were the same individuals, but the presence of large numbers of people from Argyll was duly noted at New Lanark the following year (SA, Strachur 1791, V: 571).

As we have suggested there were possibly links between the mills in Dale's cotton spinning empire, notably Spinningdale, Stanley and New Lanark itself. Spinningdale was part of Dale's plan to create a sustainable textile industry in the Highlands. Remarkably, as its ruins testify, it was very similar in design to No. 1 Mill at New Lanark. Reflecting the good intentions of Dale and his partners, the workforce there was partly composed of clearance victims from the straths of east Sutherland (Donnachie 2000: 90). Dale also had a substantial interest in Stanley, a much larger mill, which recruited most of its workers from Perthshire. We do not know what proportion of the Highland community at New Lanark reached the place directly. Some may have made step-wise moves from Spinningdale, possibly migrating further south via Stanley and other mills such as Ballindalloch, Stirlingshire, where there were also Highland workers, and Deanston, another large mill in Perthshire. Perth itself had a significant Highland population with its own Gaelic chapel by 1788 (SA, Perth 1796, XVIII: 532).

The Highland community in early 19th-century New Lanark

We can only guess at the Highland community's total numbers, though the *Statistical Account* suggests several hundred by 1793. If the experience of the Barra folk was repeated, there must have been continuing loss through people returning or migrating elsewhere, but it is possible that in-migration was sufficient to keep numbers stable or contribute to an increase. Other observers, including Owen, claimed that many of the population were Highlanders, and such observations continued as late as 1828 (Owen 1857: 62; McNab 1819: 58; Aiton 1824: 16–17; Davidson 1828). It seems probable that the maximum population of first generation Highlanders, say 300 or 400, was reached in 1800 and slowly declined thereafter. We have one benchmark for the early 1800s

when Macdonald, the great Highland preacher, served communion at Lanark parish church and there were enough adult Gaels to fill a table of a hundred (Davidson 1910: 228–29). So the total population of first and second generation Highlanders may have been twice or three times that, even taking into account others who had returned north or moved elsewhere in the Lowlands. Moreover, the 1851 census suggests that in-migration, albeit modest, continued until 1825, coincident with Owen's departure from New Lanark (Census of Scotland 1851).

By comparison with its immediate successor in 1851, the 1841 census is a notoriously frustrating source for those interested in migration. The only information recorded on place of birth was whether or not the subject had been born in or beyond the county of enumeration and if not in Scotland, whether in England, Ireland or Wales. Nor were enumerators consistent, as appears to be the case with the New Lanark returns. But, comparing the surnames and family groups recorded in the 1841 and 1851 returns, we concluded that 60 to 80 persons of Highland origin were still living in the village in 1841. This estimate discounts persons with Highland surnames in the burgh and parish, for it was said that at least 150 workers had moved from New Lanark to Lanark since 1831. The village population had been reduced to that extent, including Highlanders then residing in the burgh. Many of those resident in New Lanark were aged 40–60, having been born in Highland counties during 1780–1800, a fact confirmed by the 1851 data summarized in Table 1.

These statistics provide further evidence that half or more of the surviving cohort had arrived in New Lanark during the Dale regime before 1800, but also that Highlanders continued to move there as late as the 1820s, perhaps a function of kin and chain migration triggered by continuing distress, especially after the Napoleonic War. Taking due account of age differences, the data also suggests that numbers in the decade 1795–1804 matched those migrating during the first ten years of the community's existence.

The census of 1851 thus identifies 42 'residual' Highlanders living either in New Lanark or the burgh, two-thirds from Caithness and the remainder from other Highland counties. The works census of the same year identified among the population of 1807, seventeen from Caithness, four from Inverness, two from Argyll and one from each of Ross and Sutherland. There were also nine from Perth, who may well have had Gaelic backgrounds. While this reinforces the historical strength of the Caithness contingent it

TABLE 1: Dates of birth of 1851 cohort of Highland-born migrants in New Lanark and Lanark

<i>Years</i>	<i>Number</i>
Pre 1785	12
1785–1794	9
1795–1804	13
1805–1814	3
1815–1825	3
Post 1825	2
Total	42

Source: Census of Scotland, 1851

TABLE II: Counties of origin, 1851 cohort of migrants in New Lanark and Lanark

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
Argyll	1	2	3
Caithness	9	18	27
Inverness	4	2	6
Ross/Cromarty	0	2	2
Sutherland	2	2	4
Total	16	26	42

Source: Census of Scotland, 1851

does not necessarily discount the earlier preponderance of West Highlanders. Despite dispersal to the burgh (where seventeen, and almost all textile workers, were living), plus the presence of 260 Irish and 26 English immigrants, the New Lanark Highlanders were a small but possibly still quite distinctive group (Census of Scotland 1851).

In this distinctiveness, the role of the Gaelic language loomed large. Highlanders' continued use of Gaelic would have acted as a cultural marker, demarcating them from other New Lanark migrants and providing a boundary for their community. However, over a period of time, the linguistic patterns of the first generation of migrants would change, subject to the pressure for assimilation to the dominant language at the point

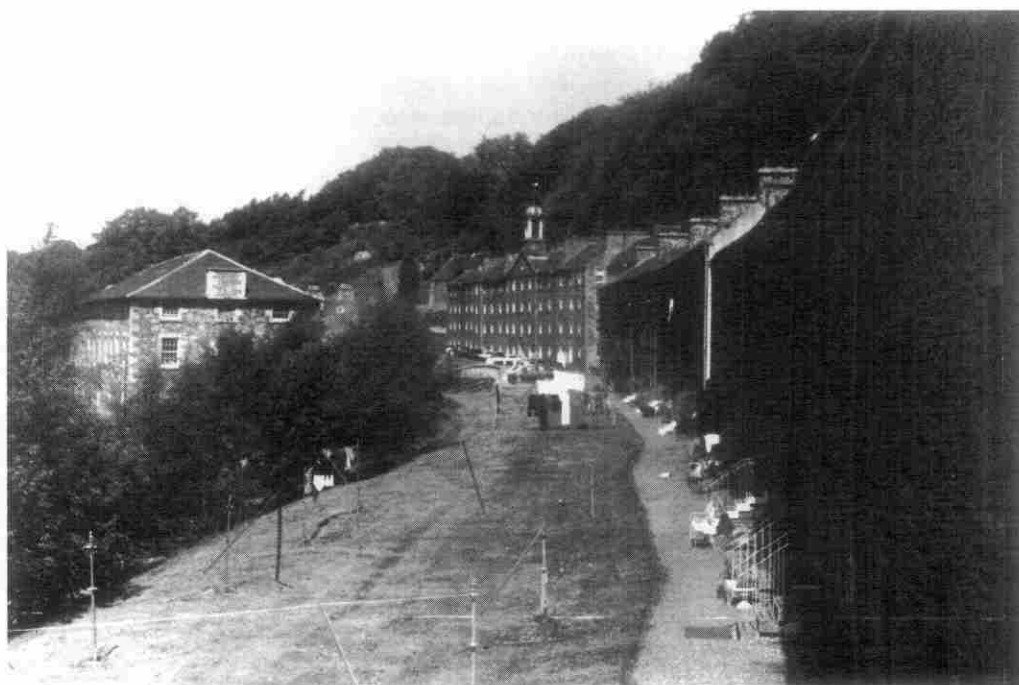


FIGURE 3 View of New Lanark along Caithness Row towards Nursery Buildings and New Buildings. The institute is on the left.

of destination. In this process of language shift in New Lanark it is likely that the attitudes of David Dale and Robert Owen would have played an important role. Therefore, having established the movement of a community of Highlanders, mainly from Caithness, to New Lanark, we now need to turn our attention to the issue of language change once people were established in their new home.

Language

The SA confirms that many Highlanders at New Lanark were not bilingual at the time of their arrival, 'a great proportion of the inhabitants were Highlanders mostly from Caithness, Inverness and Argyleshire. Few of those from the West understand English' (SA, Lanark 1795, xv: 40), and it would have been surprising if they had, given the linguistic map of Scotland at the time. Whether their linguistic fate at New Lanark was any different from Gaelic-speakers in other parts of Lowland Scotland, or, indeed, of emigrants to the United States, Canada, or Australia is debatable.

Dale was aware of language difference, for his acquaintance with the Gaelic-speaking world was substantial. His wife, Anne Caroline Campbell, of the Campbells of Jura, came of Gaelic-speaking stock. He rubbed shoulders with the urban Gaelic élite of the time, being friendly with George MacIntosh, originally of Roskeen, first President of the Gaelic Club of Gentleman in Glasgow, and a partner at Spinningdale. There, and at MacIntosh's Dunchatten dye works in Dennistoun, Glasgow, where all employees were Highland and the roll call was carried out in Gaelic (Withers 1998: 136), Dale would have been well aware of the language (Owen also knew MacIntosh and in 1802 they visited the Highlands together).

Whether, in his management capacity, Dale would have given thought to language difference is difficult to assess. We can envisage that comprehension difficulties might have impacted adversely in the workplace, in school and church, and on organized social occasions, if carried out in a language not understood by all. However, it can be argued that immediate access to labour was more important than awareness of language needs. Gaelic speakers were simply expected to assimilate English or Scots when they had to. William Davidson noted that the Highlander's 'ignorance of the lowland dialect, operated as a bar to his improvement, for, often when desired to bring a stone, he would shrug up his shoulders and return with mortar' (Davidson 1828: 166). This statement seems to imply that no rigorous system of interpretation or of Gaelic-speaking oversight was in place but Davidson may have been deliberately or subconsciously 'taking a shot' at Highlanders. His value judgement, which equated the speaking of Gaelic with inferiority, chimed with the view of the time in many quarters. As late as 1844, the Poor Law Enquiry had reinforced the view that the Gaelic language was the principal cause of Highland poverty and perceived backwardness (Withers 1998: 133).

In the modern context, Baker points out that a chicken and egg situation often obtains, noting that the minority language is:

often connected with the problems of poverty, underachievement in school, minimal social and vocational mobility and with a lack of integration into the majority culture ... [it] is perceived as a partial cause of social, economic and educational problems, rather than an effect of such problems. The attitude that 'language is an obstacle' was summed up in the phrase, 'If only they would speak English, their problems would be solved'. (Baker 1996: 354)

Neither Dale nor Owen made overt comment of this sort, deeming Gaelic speakers equally capable of doing the work, although the reality was that difficulty in attracting labour, and the Highlanders' need to overcome dire poverty, may have made it easier to hire them. By contrast, Owen's later interest in a single world language suggests that he viewed linguistic diversity as a barrier to social progress.

Linguistic assimilation at New Lanark probably happened, we assume, rather haphazardly, as a natural process and without a deliberate language policy. Comprehension skills would have developed rapidly, as is often the case when survival or economic gain is at stake. There would have been nuances in the process: those who decided factory life was not for them and intended to return to the Highlands, or temporary workers, may have engaged less with English. Nonetheless, the linguistic impact of their stay would have been apparent upon their return home. The SA for Kilmore records the impact on language in the place of origin: 'On account of their frequent intercourse with the Low Country, they very soon learn English language, in so much that most of them can speak it tolerably' (SA, Kilmore 1791-92, x: 136-37). As Withers (1998: 78) notes, migration, temporary or permanent, is an inevitable means of language change.

Language and religion

If little attention was paid to language needs in the workplace, the opposite was the case with regard to religious provision. The strength of Dale's religious fervour, the importance of religion generally, and the mission of both the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge (SSPCK) and the Gaelic Schools Society to improve the religious knowledge of the Highland people explained why Gaelic worship was readily provided at New Lanark. As early as 1793, church services were held in Gaelic (SA, Lanark 1795, xv: 41), but strangely, in the same year, the SSPCK were called upon to fund a Gaelic Chapel in the village and refused (SSPCK Minute of 7 Feb 1793, vol. 1792-99). In Owen's time, the Revd John MacDonald, the 'Apostle of the North', officiated on a number of occasions at communion services between 1800 and 1820, brought to Lanark, according to Hugh Davidson, by Lady Mary Ross of Bonnington. As we have seen, MacDonald attended communions in Lanark Parish Church, serving a table of a hundred Highlanders and addressing them in Gaelic.

Dale supported the Gaelic language on religious grounds, in 1802 anonymously donating £200 to the SSPCK's printing of a Gaelic Old Testament (SSPCK records 1746-1822: 47-48). While religious belief and patronizing good causes lay behind this, rather than linguistic fervour, it indicated his willingness to support the SSPCK tide change in policy. It had earlier taught biblical knowledge through English, in an attempt to make Highlanders better versed in the language, thus improving 'their deplorable ignorance' and destitution in 'all means of religious and moral improvement' (SSPCK records 1823-40: 3). However, the society realized that this had not been successful, which was hardly surprising with monolingual Gaelic speakers. A change in policy after 1767 provided Old and New Testaments in Gaelic in order to ensure better spiritual and moral outcomes. The long-term aim was nonetheless to convert the Highlanders linguistically, from Gaelic into English.

The endeavour to provide Gaelic worship at New Lanark cannot be directly equated with language maintenance *per se* for the main motivation was religious not linguistic. No parallel language provision is evident in other aspects of life there, such as education or social activities. However, religious worship would have been important for language development and maintenance. The subsequent history of Scottish Gaelic shows that religion played a large part in the use of, and regard for, language. Firstly, it demonstrates that, for many years, religion remained the main means of keeping the *formal* aspects of the language alive. As MacInnes notes, 'only in the Church, among major social institutions, is Gaelic used not as if it were dialect but as a language, and used as a medium of exposition on a par with any other language in that context' (MacInnes 1982: 233). MacInnes wrote that many of the great preachers of the period, including MacDonald, came from the common people, drawing on every available register of Gaelic and never talking down to their audiences (MacInnes 1981: 14-17). In this respect, Gaelic worship at New Lanark would have ensured continued exposure to rich and wide-ranging language, undoubtedly laced with erudition and intellectuality.

In diglossic societies the heritage language would have been used in home, religious and social contexts, while the majority language will be used for work and official communication. However, we have not found testimony to this from the Gaelic speaking families at New Lanark. One step on from the true diglossic society is the context in which the ritual side of language is retained, although fluency in everyday use of the language is not. Religion, song and poetry count among the set pieces which pass, often through ritual, from generation to generation. We find many examples of this today where Ukrainian, Polish, Italian, Yiddish and Gaelic kin in Scotland are not fluent, not even passively bilingual (i.e. able to understand but not speak or write the language) in their parents' or grandparents' language, but can participate in set pieces. In New Lanark, Gaelic psalms would have been sung at communion and church services. There is no evidence of secular Gaelic poetry or song, but the singing of Scots songs is widely documented, as schoolchildren, clothed in Highland dress, would have offered these as entertainment to visitors.

Owen's language agenda

Evidence implies that Owen had greater linguistic awareness than Dale, or at least made more documented comment on the subject. This point may have been linked to his acute sensitivity to his own language shortcomings, as he perceived them, 'speaking ungrammatically, a kind of Welsh English' which made him feel ill-at-ease and inferior in company (Owen 1857: 31). Further, it may explain why, during his visit to Inverness, he noted with surprise the purity of the English spoken by the inhabitants (Owen 1857: 75). He may also have had a limited knowledge of language in Scotland, having only heard Scots and Gaelic at New Lanark, noting that his language was 'naturally different from their lowland Scotch and the highland erse' (Owen 1857: 62).

While language difference might still have been evident when Owen arrived at New Lanark in 1800, we can assume that the number of monolingual Gaelic speakers was diminishing, a universal occurrence throughout the Lowlands at the time. Language assimilation and language shift would have been major aspects. We can beg the question whether ensuing generations, born of Gaels in New Lanark, were brought up as bilingual or monolingual in English. In 1807, we find in SSPCK records a request for services in

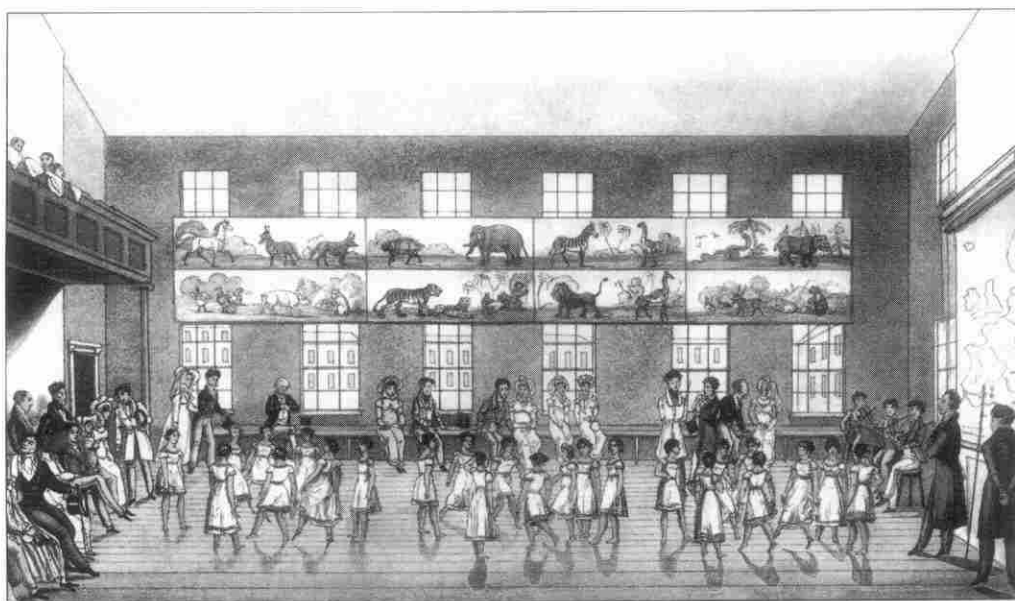


FIGURE 4 Schoolroom scene, c. 1825, showing visual aids and children dancing Scotch reels to the accompaniment of a fiddle trio. Is one of the figures in the bottom right-hand corner the benevolent Mr Owen? Source: Authors. Reproduced by permission of New Lanark Conservation Trust.

English at the Gaelic Chapel in Edinburgh, since many children in the congregation had been born and brought up in the capital, and were not acquainted with their parents' native tongue (SSPCK Minutes 1806–13, 2 April 1807: 113). Only one-tenth of the congregation did *not* understand English. The isolated nature of the New Lanark community might have slowed language change, but the pattern was probably similar.

Although Owen wrote on education and workplace policy, language has not figured as prominently as we might have expected in the running of the mills and community. If, by then, Gaelic speakers were familiar enough with English to limit inefficiency caused by linguistic difference, a language focus may not have been necessary. Similarly no mention of language was presented in his precepts for schooling, although Owen makes the point that evening lectures should be 'delivered in plain impressive language' (Owen 1857: 297). However, Owen's son, Robert Dale Owen, writing about the school at New Lanark, stressed that: '... children should never be directed to read what they cannot understand ... the children are taught to read according to the sense, and, as nearly as possible, as they would speak; so as at once to show that they comprehend what they are reading ...' (Dale Owen 1824: 36). This method must inevitably mean a greater focus on language, rather than reading in a mechanistic fashion, often an outcome of the monitorial system, aspects of which were also used at New Lanark. If comprehension was key, those with English as a second language would have presumably received greater attention.

References to the use of language in education occurred elsewhere in Owen's work. In his essay of 1813, he wrote that 'each child is to be told in language which he can understand that "he is never to injure his play-fellows ..."' (Owen 1857: 288). Later he

asks: 'Where ... shall we go to find the language of truth ...?' Of his own writing he stated that it will appear 'as an unknown language, no one word of which can they comprehend' (Owen 1857: 206). Regarding men of learning he wrote: '... their minds have been well stored with language which they can readily use to puzzle and to confound the unlettered and inexperienced' (Owen 1857: 349). In these contexts, language seemed to equate with means and clarity of expression. In this respect, Owen was ahead of his time as a precursor of 20th-century writers who aspired to make the two synonymous. His next step was to advocate one world language, since his belief was that language, like religion and habits, 'were forced upon me by Society'. He wanted to 'unite mankind ... as one man, with one language, feeling, interest and object ...', until there was one world way (Owen 1857: 16, xiii). He linked unification of language to better social cohesion, improved communication and reduction of difference. The language he deemed best suited was Anglo-Saxon (*Millennial Gazette* 1 May 1856: 23, 24; Owen 1857: 266).

Perhaps Owen's thoughts were prescient. We have seen that globalization of communication leads naturally to greater domination by the 'big' languages. The worldwide web, television and popular culture have been dominated by British and American English. Whether this diminishes feelings of foreignness is debatable. Such feelings can in fact be exacerbated for minority language speakers in a dominant language culture. Imposition of a world language is just as dubious as Owen's notion that one is 'forced' to speak one's mother tongue. This form of linguistic imperialism may have been prompted by Owen's awkwardness about the yoke of Welsh-English foisted upon him, something a 'world language' would avoid. The older Owen was not embarrassed to tell savants in Paris and Switzerland that he knew no French or any other language than his own (Owen 1857: 266). In Nuremberg he noted it was very difficult to find English speakers, and in Vera Cruz 'they knew nothing of the English language' (Owen, *Millennial Gazette* 15 May 1856: 14, 2), as though this was of some surprise! Linguistic tension remained apparent, however, since he engaged a French tutor for his sons and sent them to school in Switzerland.

Conclusion

While there are many unanswered questions about the migration and culture of the Highlanders in New Lanark, there is little doubt that they made a significant impact on the community. It is our view that the linguistic picture at New Lanark in the early 19th century differed very little from other parts of southern Scotland where only a limited or ritualistic form of Gaelic survived in an overwhelmingly English or Scots English-speaking society. The attention received by the language seems to have been limited mainly to the religious domain. Also noted was that, as with historical language studies generally, there is a substantial research deficit, reflecting the fact that language in Scotland has received less attention than it deserves (Nicolson 2000: 119–20). Its place in family and community history has certainly been neglected and it is time to redress this wherever we can.

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